

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1415, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers -
Identification**

Chair J. Sandy Bartlett & Members of the House Judiciary Committee

March 10, 2026

My name is Anne Manuel. I've lived in Silver Spring for forty years. I am among a group of neighbors who last year formed North Woodside Civil Resistance out of concern for the threat to our democracy posed by the actions of the Trump administration. I'm writing to express my strong support for HB1415, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Identification.

We are at a truly alarming moment in our country. There's been a lot of talk about what to call this administration's actions – authoritarianism, neo-royalism – even fascism no longer seems a great stretch. Whatever the label, the elements are clear: unbridled military aggression, suppression of dissent, scapegoating of vulnerable groups, and *literal* celebration of violence.

Unaccountable law enforcement is the essence of a police state. At a bare minimum, this body should insist that those empowered to detain individuals in our state publicly identify themselves. There is no room for masked, unidentifiable gunmen doing the government's bidding in a democracy.

HB 1415 is a necessary complement to HB0155, which demands that law enforcement not wear masks. In a democratic society, all security forces should be unmasked and should *clearly identify themselves by name, number, and agency*. There is simply no room for a secret police in a democracy.

In addition to the troubling lack of accountability that unidentified officers represent, they also constitute a grave danger to public security. Criminal impersonation of law enforcement officers is a rising trend, as we became acutely aware last year with the murder of a Minnesota lawmaker and her husband and the shooting of another and his wife by an individual dressed as a police officer.

Public safety is best served when individuals can more quickly and clearly verify officers' identity, not the other way around. *Maryland law must make clear that masked, unidentified individuals with guns are operating outside the law*. I believe that HB1415, together with HB0155, are vital steps in the right direction toward achieving these goals. Thank you for your consideration.

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